

An Unexpected Hugging.

As the Allegheny Talley railroad train bound northward stopped at the station recently a half-grown girl, accompanied by a man, descended to the platform. The man looked around anxiously, as if in search of another train. The girl also looked around anxiously, but she didn't seem to care about another train. She was pretty, but there was a restless expression in her eye which indicated an aching void that trains could never fill.

A telegraph messenger boy, struck with her beauty, gazed at her with a freedom that attracted her wandering attention. Just as the man who accompanied her stepped into the station to inquire if the Buffalo, New York and Philadelphia train was on time the girl flew at the admiring messenger boy, folded him in her arms and hugged him rapturously.

"Oh, you dear, darling, sweet little thing!" exclaimed the girl, in a voice tremulous with unrestrained emotion. Again she showered kisses upon his cheeks, which were blushing as only those of a new-to-the-business messenger boy can blush. Again she frantically pressed him to her bosom and broke out into passionate words, uttered in equally passionate tones: "Kiss me again! Oh, do kiss me! Don't turn from me."

The boy evidently didn't know what to make of it. He would have enjoyed it more if a crowd had not assembled to witness the proceedings, but he was too bashful to hug before a crowd. He tore himself from her embrace and rushed down the platform. The girl fairly flew after him, like Atalanta in the mythological race. She was gaining on him, and in one minute more would have been hugging him at the end of the platform, when the man emerged from the station door.

"Hello!" said he as he looked at the spot where he had left the girl. "Where is—?" But the direction which the crowd of loungers had taken made it unnecessary for him to finish the question. He looked down the platform and in a kind but a firm voice shouted, "Nellie!"

Nellie started as if she had been shot. The fugitive messenger boy, who was still running as never messenger boy ran before, had no further attractions for her. Timid and subdued in manner, as though fearful of reproof, she rejoined her companion. Just then the Titusville train came up and they got aboard.

"Crazy?" said the handsome station agent. "Yes; he's taking her to the North Warren asylum. Of course she's crazy. The idea of hugging a little chap like that, who should be down-peaked or disgraced."

The Wicomicoes.

Make two bags, each about a foot long and six inches wide of some dark material, and sew them together at the edge so that one may be inside the other. Next make a number of pockets, each with a cover to it, which may be fastened down with a button and loop. Place these about two inches apart, between the two bags, sewing one side of the pocket to one bag and the other side to the other. Make slits through both bags about an inch long, just above the pockets, so that you can put your hand in the bags; and, by inserting your thumb and finger through these slits, you may obtain entrance to the pockets and bring out of them whatever they contain. It is, of course, necessary that a variety of articles should be put in the pockets. Before commencing the trick you may turn the bag inside out any number of times, so that your audience may conclude that it is quite empty. You can then cause to appear or disappear any number of articles of a light nature, much to the amusement of your audience.

Last of the Wicomicoes.

The Wicomicoes as a tribe sold out their possessions to the colonists and moved away. A few, however, embraced Christianity and remained behind. A majority of these converts and their descendants intermarried with the slave population. There is in Charles county, one Indian who is said to be undoubtedly of original unmixed Wicomico blood. His complexion is very dark, but not like that of a negro. His eyes are dark and piercing, his hair is of the same color and straight. He is rather uncommunicative and averse to conversation. His replies are always monosyllabic in character. His profession is nominally that of a farmer, yet most of his time is employed in hunting, fishing and idleness.

Nicaragua Canal.

The total length of the route of the proposed Nicaragua Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific is 173-157 miles. This is composed of 17,27 miles of canal, from the Pacific at Brito harbor to the lake of Nicaragua, 56.50 miles of lake navigation, 69.90 miles of navigation of the river San Juan, and 35.90 miles of canal from this river to Greytown. The estimated cost of this work is \$41,193,830, or little more than one dollar of capital against one pound in the estimate of M. Volsin for the Panama canal of 46 1/2 miles in length.

Those who have not experienced some of the "ups and downs of life" seldom are prepared for its emergencies.

Underground Exploration in Austria

The extraordinary underground phenomena found in certain portions of the southern and Adriatic provinces of Austria including miles of underground caverns, lakes that disappear and reappear at regular seasons, and rivers that are swallowed up by the earth and come to the surface again at many mile's distance, have recently been the subject of much attention on the part of the Austro-German Alpine club and of the Club degli Alpinisti di Trieste. A section of the members of the former body determined some time ago to institute a systematic exploration of the subterranean course of the River Reka. Rising in the Schneeberg, in Carniola, this mysterious stream suddenly disappears in so-called Karst caverns. At San Giovanni di Duino, the Reka is lost, a river of corresponding magnitude is found issuing from the foot of a hill. This stream is known as the Timavo, which takes a westward course, and discharges its waters into the Bay of Monfalcone. As to the present year no attempt had ever been made practically to demonstrate the fact. The members of the Austro-German Alpine club, who had resolved to explore the underground meanderings of the river, made their preliminary reconnaissance on March 30 last. Starting from the celebrated cavern of St. Cazian, into which the Reka pours its waters soon after its disappearance from the surface, the exploring party succeeded in following the course of the stream for a short distance. Owing to the unusual dryness of the summer, however, it was impossible to proceed with the work of exploration until the month of September, when a second expedition started. The third attempt was made on the 9th of the present month. A boat and raft which had with great difficulty been got down to the stream in the cavern in March had been carried away by a sudden rush of water before September. Fresh boats were accordingly provided for the second attempt.

Starting from the first great cavern called the Rudolph's Dome, the expedition, consisting of four persons in two boats, proceeded on their eventful voyage. From the cavern just mentioned the river flows for 200 feet through a narrow channel between two perpendicular walls of rock, estimated to be upwards of 100 yards in height. At the end of this channel the explorers, whose course throughout was illuminated by the magnesium light, found themselves in a vast cavern, where they were able to land. Fastening up their boats, they proceeded for some distance on foot past several cascades and rapids. They followed the course of the stream within a much difficulty for a considerable distance, after leaving the cavern discovered cavern, leading to the bank at first. At length they reached a spot where the river contracts to a width of barely twelve feet. Here they were compelled to cross to the right bank, which they did by help of a wooden ladder they had with them. The advance now became more difficult, the explorers being only able to get forward by creeping and climbing. At length they came to the sixth waterfall, which the party was unable to pass. The river here runs between two perpendicular walls of rocks, and suddenly takes a downward leap of over twenty feet. From the Rudolph's Dome, where the start was made, to the sixth waterfall the distance is rather over a furlong, and requires half a day to accomplish. At the third attempt the four gentlemen forming the expedition succeeded by help of suitable ladders and other apparatus in getting over this cataract and advancing some distance beyond it. They soon, however, came to a seventh waterfall, where they were compelled to turn back. They found that to make any further progress it would be necessary to get a boat past the last waterfall, as there is no standing room on either side of the stream, but sheer perpendicular walls of rock. The further exploration of the underground river will be resumed as soon as the requisite apparatus can be got ready. In the meantime the Alpine Club has decided to make the approaches to the Rudolph's Dome cavern more easy of access to the general public. The second cavern, which was discovered in September, is of far greater dimensions than the Rudolph's Dome or any of the other caves of this district. Its height is upward of 450 feet, so that it could easily contain the cathedral of St. Peter's at Rome.

With regard to the Italian Alpine Club, its committee has during the past summer done some good service by rendering the splendid cavern of Trebitsh, discovered by Herr Lindner forty years ago, accessible to the ordinary holiday tourist. The cavern can only be approached by descending a deep shaft down which visitors have hitherto had to clamber on the bare rocks. The Club degli Alpinisti have now caused a series of ladders, seventy-four in number, to be fixed. The Trebitsh cavern is 300 feet high, 400 feet in width and 1,000 feet in length. Through it flows a river which several authorities believe to be identical with the Reka and Timavo, but the hypothesis is repudiated by many other observers. The question can only be settled when the Austro-German Alpine Club shall have accomplished the interesting task it has taken in hand—that of following the subterranean course of the river Reka from its beginning to its termination.

A Mysterious Key

About a year since it was rumored that a gentleman in Tucson had found the much sought for Tumacacori mine, but was debarred entrance to it by a large iron door. The story gained considerable circulation, and it was accepted in good faith by Tio Nasario, an old Mexican, a veteran prospector and well known in this city, and which, much respected. He knows every legend and romance that time and ignorance has woven around the anciently-worked mines of the Jesuit fathers, and his belief in them is unswerving, and will die only when he dies. Last week he was at the old Tumacacori mission, looking it over for the thousandth time. From the mission he went to the mountains on the west side and happened upon an old iron key. It was of antique make, had lain long and had rusted deep, but that is the key that unlocked the iron door that has hitherto barred securely the time-hidden treasures of the Tumacacori; at least so thought Tio (uncle) Nasario, who, without waiting to make further discoveries, had himself to Tucson, where he is now engaged in raising a company to explore the iron door previously mentioned. He has the key and he lacks but the lock to put it in, and, as the lock which it belongs to is on the iron door of the mine, he purposes to raise funds to form a company and search for the mine. He says, will put in \$50,000, and thus raise a working capital of \$100,000. The door can be found, the key broken, the long coveted treasures brought to the light of day.

Mrs. Jesus Castro, an aged Mexican lady, now residing at American Falls, in the Santa Catalina Mountains, is perhaps the only woman who, by speaking, ever cost her husband her weight in gold. It is said that in the early gold-digging days of California she was a resident of Sonora, in which State she was born and grew to womanhood. When about the age of seventeen a paternal uncle, but a few years her senior, returned with his companions, gold-laden, from the El Dorado of the West, and became desperately enamored of her. He sought her hand in marriage and was accepted, but the church refused, because of the near relation ship existing between them, to solemnize the marriage. Persuaded in vain, he tried the power of gold to win the church's way, and succeeded only by the payment of her weight in gold. She at that time weighed 117 pounds, and against her in the scales he glittering dust was shoveled. Her ancient husband still had sufficient of this world's goods to provide a comfortable home, and they were married. They lived happily together, and she never lost her lustre or her youth, in the opinion of those who had known her married again, Mr. Castro being her second husband. The above is a fact and not fiction, as living witness can prove.

House Plants.

Dryness of the air is the chief obstacle to successful window gardening. Plants succeed much better in the kitchen than in the parlors, as the air is charged with moisture from the cooking, etc. If the house is heated by a furnace, there should be a pan of evaporating water in the furnace, and well supplied. If stoves are used, keep vessels of water on them. Dust is inimical to plants. Much may be prevented from settling on the leaves by covering the plants with a light fabric whenever the rooms are swept. All smooth-leaved plants, like the ivy, pelagias, etc., should have a weekly washing with a damp sponge. The others may be placed in a sink or bath-tub, and given a thorough showering. Water should be given as needed, whether daily or weekly. Do not water until the soil is somewhat dry. Keeping the earth constantly wet soon makes unhealthy plants. Let the water be of the same temperature as the room. Hanging plants dry out rapidly. Plunge the pots or baskets in a pail or tub of water, and after they have ceased to dip return them to their places. The so-called green fly or plant louse is easily killed by tobacco water. Apply this when of the color of weak tea. Red spider is very minute, and works on the lower sides of the leaves. When these turn brown the spider may be suspected. Give frequent showers, laying the pot on the side, and apply water with the syringe. Scale insects and mealy bugs are best treated by hand-picking before they become numerous. On cactuses, when through flowering, should have the stems cut away and the pots of roots taken to the cellar. The pots of bulbs which were placed in the cellar or in a pit for roots to form, may be brought to the window, and as they grow give an abundance of water. If needed, support the heavy flower spikes by acanthus by a small stake.

The eminent botanist, De Candolle, gave the age of an elm at three hundred and thirty-five years. The ages of some palms have been set down at from six hundred to seven hundred years, that of an olive tree at seven hundred years, that of a pine tree at seven hundred and twenty, of a cedar at eight hundred, of an oak at one thousand five hundred, of a yew at two thousand eight hundred and eighty, and of a baobab tree at five thousand.

Modern Old Folks.

Dr. Holmes mentions among the discoveries of maturity, "that age was older once than now." To fifteen, seventy seems like the span of Methuselah. To forty-five it is but a nearing milestone by the way, and by no means the goal in the race of life. But, besides that, the point of view changes in our estimate of the dealings of time. There is no doubt but that age was older once than now.

Everybody remembers seeing, as a child, very old people sans eyes, sans hair, sans teeth, sans everything. Lucky was the small spectator if these decrepit patriarchs were not his venerable ancestors, extortionate of duty visits, much tribute of reluctant kisses, and enforced companionship. For children are not cumbered with traditional sentiment, and arrive by swift processes at the conclusion that age is not, of itself, venerable or interesting. They may be patient, or pitiful, or conscientiously polite. But if the dear grandmother is foolish and selfish, they recognize that fact with clearness. If the dear grandfather bores them to death, they know that they are bored.

The kind of grandfather and grandmother, however, on whom full-page pictures were bestowed in the juveniles of forty years ago is becoming as rare as the Dodo. He, who with a countenance of infantile-senile innocence, and lank white locks falling over his shoulders, sat in a hard chair and passed his days in telling stories of his distant youth to spell-bound children, spindleshanked, and pale of face, has ceased to be. She who, in self-denying cap and painful gown, leaned back in a "Boston rocker," her window opening on an allegorical sunset, her attenuated arms folded in her lap, her ancient spectacles pushed up above her wrinkled forehead, and an air of supposed sanctity infolding her like a martyr's robe, is but a tradition.

The actual grandfather is a keen and active personage, far too busy with the need to wax garrulous over the past. He is director of a dozen corporations, interested in a dozen charities, public improvements and new enterprises. He drives out and goes to parties with "the girls" who have girls of their own almost old enough to go with them. He plays a capital game of whist, and is considered an invaluable counselor by the youngest politicians of his party. In short, he does with his might what his hand finds to do, and when, at last, his name appears in that somber newspaper list where all our names must one day stand, the obituary notice remarks that his death was a surprise to his friends, as he was at work as usual only the Friday before.

The actual grandmother is even busier and more active. She never has time to be "looking toward sunset."

Her housekeeping is elaborate, and she is competent to "boss" the housekeeper of her married daughters, though principle may forbid her to do it. She attends concerts, is a keen critic of the play and players, reads the monthlies, weeklies and dailies has strong party convictions, crochets, knits rugs, embroiders table scarfs, goes to church and amuses her grandchildren. She dresses with an art that admits age but does not suggest supranumeration, and is, altogether, an important figure.

Mankind is apt to ignore its benefactors, among whom, conspicuous for their benefits, are the dentists. Perfectly fitting false teeth have done more to postpone age than any one physical cause. Before their use was general, old people were never properly nourished, because their food was never assimilated. Their thin blood kept them in shivering discomfort close to the fire in the one or two rooms which were habitually comfortable in winter. They looked and felt in the way, and grew querulous and exacting. They could not exercise. The difficulty of bathing and dressing made them indifferent about personal attractiveness. The adoption of false teeth, the more uniform heating of houses, the general use of modern improvements that take account of all bodily necessities, and that profoundly wise decree of fashion which insists on the natural gray hair, forbidding both dyes and wigs to old people, and condemning the hideous "false front" of an earlier generation to outer darkness, these, of themselves, might have made age young again.

But these have implied other changes. Habits of travel have been formed. Variety instead of monotony of existence has been secured. Most potent of all, life has become interesting. It is related of a certain leader of society that at thirty-five she retired from the gay world, her hair having become a gray that her young daughters thought it frivolous and indecorous for her to attend dancing parties. Having married off those intolerant guardians, she began life on her own account, as it were, and now at eighty-four is indispensable at committee-rooms and receptions, walks her five miles without flinching, and plays the "Moonlight Sonata" with incomparable grace.

Our dowager has found the true elixir of youth, which is mental energy. Men and women appear young by feeling young. They feel young by being vitally interested in the pursuits of youth, prosperity, enjoyment, culture and the improvement of the race. The mind commands the obedient body to be ready and alert.

This busy world puts age at a disadvantage. It is organized at the interest of youth and force and progress. But young fellows of 60 and 70 may have as good a chance and as good a time as young fellows of 20 in this reconstructed chronology. And young ladies of threescore may be as welcome and necessary at home and in society as those other young ladies their granddaughters.

Our Ancestors as Nut Eaters.

In tropical woods, where our "hairy quadrumanous ancestor" used profusely to disport himself, as yet unconscious of his glorious destiny as the remote progenitor of Shakespeare, Milton and the late Mr. Peace—in tropical woods acrid or pungent fruits and plants were particularly common, and correspondingly annoying. The fact is, our primitive forefather and all the other monkeys are, or were, confirmed fruit eaters. But to guard against their depredations a vast number of tropical fruits and nuts have acquired disagreeable or fiery rinds and shells, which suffice to deter the bold aggressor. It may not be nice to get your tongue burnt with a root or fruit, but it is at least a great deal better than getting poisoned; and, roughly speaking, pungency in external nature exactly answers to the rough gaudy labels which some chemists paste on bottles containing poisons. It means to say: "This fruit or leaf, if you eat it in any quantities, will kill you." That is the true explanation of capsicums, pimento, colocynth, cotton oil, the upas tree, and the vast majority of bitter, acrid or fiery fruits and leaves. If we had to pick up our own livelihood, as our naked ancestors had to do, from roots, seeds and berries, we should far more appreciate this simple truth. We should know that a great many more plants than we now suspect are bitter or pungent, and therefore poisonous. Even in England we are familiar enough with such defences as those possessed by the outer rind of the walnut, but the tropical cashewnut has a rind so intensely acrid that it blisters the lips and fingers instantaneously, in the same way as cantharides would do. I believe that on the whole, taking nature throughout, more fruits and nuts are poisonous or intensely bitter, or very fiery, than are sweet, luscious and edible.

The Vicar's Christmas.

All day the snow had been falling in great feathery flakes, blotting out the barren stretch of field and meadow, hiding fences and hedges, and wrapping the earth in one vast mantle of purity. At midnight the storm ceased. Nature, having cooled the landscape with her wintry wind, resting from her work, a fine mist, sharply distinct against the western sky, stood like grim sentinels keeping watch over the body of a white-robed comrad. It was bitterly cold. When the faint streak of red in the horizon announced day-break, a black object might have been seen moving through the snow. A closer observation would have shown that the object was a man. He plunged through the drifts, breathing heavily at every step, and stopping now and then to glance around, as if not sure of the course he was taking. A rough outer garment enveloped him, and when the wind blew this aside it disclosed a glimpse of gay-striped cloth beneath. It was the garb of a convict.

The man now fixed his gaze at a wreath of smoke that curled lazily from a distant chimney. In fact, the house was so low and so deeply buried in the fleecy mass that only the chimney-top was visible. It was toward this house that the wanderer was making his way, his progress being impeded by frequent stubbles, as he met depressions in the ground which the snow had filled up. At last he reached the goal. A bright light shone through the frosty window, and a shadowy form passed and repassed before it. The man pressed his face upon the pane. The room into which he looked was rude but comfortable. At the farther end a brisk fire was burning, and over it a tea-kettle steamed cheerily. Above the fire-place were several little stockings, varying in length. Somebody was moving about in the room apparently engaged in getting breakfast.

The wanderer hesitated for a moment, and then, drawing his long cloak closer about him, he knocked at the door. It was thrown open and a man stood on the threshold, shading his eyes with his hand, as if blinded by the dazzling whiteness without. "Who is there?" he said, in a clear, ringing voice.

"A stranger, needing rest and warmth," was the answer. "Come in," cried the first speaker, eyeing his visitor with a sharp but not unfriendly glance. "Here, draw up to the fire, we shall have breakfast in a few minutes." The man seated himself, and spread his chilled hands to the welcome blaze. As he did so his cloak became unfastened. The host started back with an exclamation of startled surprise. "Yes," said the convict, in a dull, apathetic tone, "you know what I am; an outcast of society, something to be dreaded and shunned; a wretch who only looks forward to the grave. But do you think I do not know what it is

to lead such a life as yours is? Once I had a home, friends, was prospering—and I fell."

Faltering a little he went on: "I had a wife, she never knew my disgrace; she believed me dead. The thought of her has haunted me in the long years I have spent in prison. Was she living? Was she in want? I must find out. The agony I endured! Hours seemed like weeks, weeks like centuries. If I had not done something I should have gone mad. At last I determined to escape. Can you understand what it is to flit at an iron bar day after day, to dig into the stones with the bare fingers and remove them bit by bit, to meet with failure, failure, failure, and to begin again, again and again?"

"Finally I was free, The storm helped me; the darkness came to my aid. It is only for a little while, but I am safe till to-morrow. If I can learn something of my wife before I am retaken I shall have done all that I can do in this world. Now I am ready to go."

He arose, and there was something like dignity in his bearing. "No," said the other firmly. "Heaven forbid that John Benton should turn the most miserable of God's creatures from his roof, and on Christmas of all days. Stay—and may He be merciful to you!"

He went to the door of an adjoining room and called, "Mary!" A pleasant faced woman appeared, followed by a group of rosy children, shouting merry Christmas greetings.

"This, Mary," said the husband, "is a poor fellow who—who plays in a circus. You see his queer clothes. He strayed away from the company and was lost in the snow. We must take care of him, eh, mother?"

The woman answered in a few kind words.

But the convict grew deadly pale, and shrank further into the dusky corner. His eyes glommed like the eyes of a hunted animal. Every nerve was quivering. He was saying, "Found!" and this is my wife; was my wife I am dead to her now. She cannot even recognize me. Am I not dead to myself? What resemblance do I bear to the Hugh Langley of other days; the days when I was a respected man; before crime had fastened its clutch upon me? Here she is, happy in the love of husband and children; while I—But," he thought with fierce exultation, "one word from me would destroy all this happiness. Shall I say it? I have the power. I, too, have suffered! or shall I keep silence?"

The voice of John Benton, calling him to breakfast, broke in on his thoughts. The meal was simple yet abundant. At the beginning the husband read from the Scriptures. He was not gifted in elocution, this plain farmer, but the heart was there. And then he asked a blessing on the household and the stranger within his gate.

The guest bowed his head. "A religious man if he is a play-actor," said Mary Benton to herself.

The day passed peacefully and quietly. Husband and wife went about their daily duties. The children played with their Christmas gifts, Hugh Langley crouched in the shadow answering briefly when spoken to. Now and then a little one, attracted by his gay attire, crept to him and wondered at his passionate caresses and the tears in his eyes.

The shades of evening fell, the candles were lighted, and the children were hustled off to bed; no sound broke the stillness save the ticking of the clock and the snapping of the fire on the hearth. Then the stranger said: "Mr. Benton will you grant me one favor?"

"What is it?" asked John very kindly. "Will you read that passage you read this morning—"There is more joy—over one sinner that repenteth—"

And John read the chapter, read it as he had never read before, feeling the sweetness of the promise, thrilled with the thought of Divine compassion. And when he had finished, the listener spoke softly, but in a voice so earnest, so full of pathetic entreaty, that even the Angels in Heaven must have heard and pitied, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

When the morning came the officers of the law, flushing with victory, rejoicing that they had tracked their prey—that he was within their grasp. Concealment was useless. John Benton pointed to the room wherein the convict slept. The officers crowded to the doorway, but paused at the unaccustomed sight which met their gaze.

At the bedside knelt a figure in the attitude of prayer.

One of the men stepped forward and tapped the figure, not ungently, on the shoulder. It did not stir. Then he bent over and looked into the man's face. "Boys," he cried, "Number Sixteen's dead."

Wolves.

The excessive coldness of the weather and heavy snowstorms are reported to have driven herds of wolves from the Carpathian mountains into the cultivated districts, where they have in some cases spread terror among the people. At Homonna, in North Hungary, a pack of 120 wolves entered the village while the inhabitants were at church, and were not driven out until a squadron of Uhlands attacked them with swords and carbines.